Building a Strong Foundation for Teaching: The fifth Annual Report of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the fifth consecutive year, the Department of Education, in cooperation with the New Brunswick Teachers' Association, and the University of New Brunswick, organized the Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) in all 12 anglophone school districts of the province. Two hundred sixty-six beginning teachers in150 schools were paired with experienced teachers who acted as their mentors for the school year. The number of beginning teachers represents a 5 % increase from the previous year, and a 70.5 % increase since the Program began in 1995. The database for this report consists of survey responses from four groups of participants (% returns in brackets): beginning teachers (68.4%), mentors (65.4%), principals (53.3%), district coordinators (100%). No data was received from School District 10 in the first three categories.

Approximately 41% of the 'beginning teachers' in the program were recent university graduates without teaching experience. This is the lowest figure ever recorded. The remainder had previous experience, ranging from supply teaching to many years of full-time teaching in other jurisdictions. All were new appointments in their districts.

District coordinators reported that they had been able to recruit enough competent mentors. This conclusion was supported by the principals. Three out of four mentors were volunteering for the first time; 90.6% indicated they would be willing to repeat as mentors.

Orientation workshops for beginning teachers and training workshops for mentors were organized in every school district. Most were held in September or early in October. In addition. several districts have initiated summer institutes to prepare beginning teachers for the opening days of school. Increasing numbers of coordinators are collaborating to present combined sessions for teachers from adjacent districts. Participants gave high ratings to these introductory workshops. Following the initial training sessions, eleven of the twelve districts organized additional group meetings or workshops. Virtually every beginning teacher and mentor rated these district-organized sessions as either "very useful" or "satisfactory".

The report analyzes data on the frequency of participation by beginning teachers in seven lower-risk and five higher-risk professional activities which are encouraged at the local school level. Compared to 1999, there were no statistically-significant changes in any of the low-risk activities (e.g. sharing resources, lesson planning, discussing teaching and assessment strategies). Participation rates in lower-risk activities generally exceeded 95 %, although the frequency of participation varied considerably. These levels were considered to be acceptable.

Participation rates in higher-risk activities were generally lower than in 1999, although the only activity which was statistically significant was "mentor observes me teach". As in previous years, beginning teachers indicated they wanted more opportunities to participate in higher-risk activities, namely observing colleagues teach, observing mentors teach, being observed teaching by one's mentor, and receiving feedback about one's teaching.

All four participant groups strongly endorsed the continuation of the BTIP with recommendations ranging from 98.9 to 100 %. Approximately 96 % of the beginning teachers and 96.5% of the mentors felt that they had personally benefitted from their involvement in the Program. It appears that the BTIP was not beneficial for from four to seven beginning teachers and an equal number of mentors. There was not a clear pattern to the reasons.

Lack of time to participate in activities and being mis-matched with a mentor who had a different grade or teaching assignment, were the two problems most frequently reported by both beginning teachers and their mentors. District coordinators appear to have improved communications with principals aconcerning BTIP activities and attempted to address the unique mentoring needs of specialists and itinerant teachers, although it will be necessary to continue these efforts.

The mentors many complimentary comments suggested four identifiable ways that the program has been of professional and personal benefit to them. These four themes were friendship, motivation, personal satisfaction, and professional growth and development. The latter theme contained five sub-themes: reflection on best practices, collaboration with colleagues, gaining new ideas from partners, observations in other classrooms, and access to resources and funds.

Principals were unanimous in their support for continuation of the program. A revised method of determining the level of principals' involvement suggests that most principals have a reasonable knowledge of the BTIP and are moderately involved. With a few exceptions, they generally felt better informed of BTIP activities than previously; most were satisfied with the level of their involvement and were content to play a supporting role. For the first time, no principals were acting as mentors. This improvement was offset by the discovery that several mentors were paired with more than one beginning teacher.

With one exception, district coordinators perceived strong support from the Department of Education and school principals. Three coordinators still felt that NBTA support was inadequate. This perception appeared to be related to the fixed level of funding which, when divided among more participants, results in reduced grants for each pair of teachers. Many of the coordinators indicated that the BTIP provided them with personal and professional satisfaction. All eleven district coordinators recommended the program's continuation.

The report concluded that despite significant growth over a five-year period, the BTIP Steering Committee continues to make appropriate adjustments to its program with the result that participating teachers can expect a high-quality program. Although the evolving model is sound and current guidelines should be continued, this is not a time for complacency. The issue of who should qualify as a beginning teacher was raised again. District administrators were encouraged to consider sharing coordinator's responsibilities among supervisors.

Recommendations

1. The overall integrity and value of the BTIP remain very high. This program should continue using current guidelines and features which have proven to be successful.

2. District coordinators should continue in their efforts to inform principals about the goals of the BTIP and to clearly communicate ways in which they may either contribute or participate.

3. The chairperson of the Steering committee should encourage school directors or superintendents to consider the option of appointing more than one person to share the position of district coordinator. This shares the significant workload associated with this position and provides a back-up in case of illness or appointment to another position.

4. Inter-district cooperation appears to be beneficial in the cases where it has been attempted. Other districts with logical connections are encouraged to explore this option.

5. As the number of participants continue to increase, the fixed NBTA grant structure causes reduced allocations to pairs of teachers. In order to seek ways to stabilize the annual allocation of funds and to facilitate planning for partners and organizers, the Steering Committee should review the demographics of projected induction programs and determine the implications of current funding levels on Program integrity.

6. District coordinators need to either provide training for mentors who encounter dysfunctional partners or make them aware that guidance will be provided if and when it is needed.

7. It appears that some progress has been made in training specialist and/or itinerant mentors how to adapt to the unique demands of their assignment. However, district coordinators need to continue this initiative and to share new insights with colleagues.

8. It is essential that as the expertise of the current district coordinators grows, ways and means to share this information, especially when a new coordinator is appointed, should be assured by the Steering Committee.

9. The initiative by several districts to offer summer workshops for beginning teachers or newly appointed mentors addresses a long-standing complaint of BTIP participants that support should be provided before school begins. District coordinators who are unable to organize such activities, should encourage their beginning teachers or mentors to attend those offered in other districts.

10. With increasing numbers of beginning teachers and mentors participating in the BTIP, re-consideration should be given to excluding teachers who have taught for more than two years in a continuing contract, even if it was with another district or school unit outside the province.

11. The Steering Committee is encouraged to hold a forum to review the current rates of participation by mentors and beginning teachers in the higher-risk activities listed in Table 5, with a view to determining whether or not the BTIP expectations are reasonable.

12. The Steering Committee should make it clear to BTIP organizers and/or school administrators that asking one teacher to accept responsibility for mentoring more than one beginning teacher is not acceptable.

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Building a Strong Foundation for Teaching: The Fifth Annual Report of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick

This report has been prepared for the Department of Education in the province of New Brunswick, Canada. Its purpose is to provide a detailed description of the reactions of beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators in the 12 anglophone school districts which participated in this teacher induction program during the 1999-2000 school year. The report is based on data collected by questionnaires sent in May 2000 to each of the four groups mentioned above. In addition to describing participants' reactions to the various program components, the report attempts to track the evolution of this program by comparing the most recent data to those of previous years. Finally, the report contains recommendations for future directions.

The New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program (BTIP) was implemented province-wide in all anglophone districts in the Fall of 1995. A report on each of these years is available from both the Department of Education, Fredericton, NB, (Scott, Smith, & Grobe, 1995; Scott & Compton, 1996; Scott, 1997; Scott 1998; Scott and Surette, 1999) and the ERIC Database (Resources in Education).

Structure and Funding

The Steering Committee of the BTIP is chaired by Tom Hanley, the Assistant-director of Professional Development and Innovations with the Department of Education. In addition to one representative from the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA) and one from the University of New Brunswick, each of the 12 anglophone school districts sends one representative, usually a district supervisor, who coordinates the program in his/her district.

Funding is provided by both the Department of Education and the NBTA which represents only anglophone teachers in the province. The Department transfers to each district $500 for every pair of participants, based on full-time equivalent (FTE) beginning teachers. District Coordinators are responsible for allocating this money to the pairs of beginning teachers and mentors. In a memorandum to district coordinators, dated October 30, 1996, Mr. Hanley reminded coordinators of the intended uses for these funds: a) providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to visit each others' classrooms; b) providing release time for new teachers and their mentors to meet to discuss materials, to review videos, and to dialogue about teaching; c) purchasing materials that focus on the teaching process and support the professional growth of beginning teachers. The Department of Education's allocations to each district are made available at the beginning of each school year but they must be spent by the end of the budgetary year which ends on March 31.

In addition, the NBTA makes funds available to each pair of teachers (based on FTE beginning teachers), but they must apply directly to the NBTA professional development officer in order to receive it. Since the total funding available from the NBTA is a fixed amount ($35 000), the actual allocation to each pair varies from year to year, depending on the number of

pairs. This year, with more participants, the allotment per pair amounted to $131.58. Grants have ranged from a high of $300 in 1996-97, to $225 in 1997-98, $165 last year, to the lowest figure this year. Applications must be completed by existing pairs and processed by NBTA staff before cheques are issued. NBTA funds are not available until well after the BTIP is in operation This funding, however, may be used until the end of the regular school year in June.

Introduction to the Study

The Database

Table 1, which follows, shows the number of beginning teachers, mentors, principals and district coordinators who were involved in the 1999-2000 BTIP. It also indicates the number of survey returns in each category and the overall percentage returns on a provincial basis.

Table 1

Numbers, categories, and percentage returns of participants in the BTIP Survey

	Categories of participants			
	beginning teachers	**mentors**	**principals**	**coordinators**
# participants	266	263	150	11
# survey returns	182	172	83	11
% returns	68.4%	65.4%	53.3%	100%

Although 12 school districts participated in the BTIP, only 11 district coordinators are indicated in Table 1 because one coordinator was responsible for two districts. Mid-way through the school year the coordinator in School District 10 accepted a position as principal of a major high school; unfortunately he was not replaced. Consequently, questionnaires were never distributed to the 40 mentor/beginning teacher pairs or to the participating school principals. When the situation was recognized, the researcher contacted the former coordinator and conducted a phone interview to complete a coordinator's questionnaire. However, without any other completed surveys from District 10, the percentage returns reflected in Table 1 are lower than for the previous year, especially in the beginning teachers' category, which dropped from 75.5% in 1999 to 68.4% this year. If the 40 participants in District 10 were omitted from the calculation, the percent return would increase to 80.5 per cent. The unfortunate fact remains that, with the exception of the coordinator's survey, data from District 10, a geographically large area including the area between the boundaries Saint John City and the US border and the Fundy Islands of Grand Manan and Deer Island, is missing from this report.

Table 2, which follows, provides a comparison of the number of participants in each the five years since the BTIP became a provincial initiative in1995.

Table 2

A five-year comparison of BTIP participant numbers

Participants	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
Beginning Teachers	156	125	210	253	266
Mentors	147	125	210	253	263
Principals/Schools	96	78	108	130	150
Coordinators	12	12	12	12	11

Although it is a Program expectation that each beginning teacher will be assigned one experienced teacher to act as his/her mentor, this has not always been the case as the occasional discrepancies between the numbers in these two categories in Table 2 illustrate. Normally one would expect to find equal numbers of mentors and beginning teachers. The discrepancy in the first year was created in District 2, when many beginning teachers who were listed as participants were never assigned mentors. There have been a few other cases in various districts in which one mentor worked with two beginning teachers because no one else was available. Often the figures do not reflect these cases because each beginning teacher was assigned a mentor. However this year, three mentors reported that they were assigned to work with two beginning teachers each. This may be occurring more often than we are aware, but at least the 2000 figures reflect some discrepancy.

Although we use the term, "beginning teacher," to refer to new teachers paired with experienced mentors, the data clearly indicate that many of these teachers were not novice teachers. This year only 41.2% or 75 of the 182 beginning teachers who responded to the survey indicated that they were recent university graduates without any previous experience. This means that the remainder, nearly 60%, had taught previously as supply teachers or as full-time teachers in another province or state. Approximately three-quarters of this group had been supply teachers; 24% had taught previously on a full-time basis. Their experience had been in another school district or outside the province; they were invariably new to the district and sometimes teaching in an unfamiliar grade or subject area. Although most of the new teachers with previous full-time experience had taught for less than two years, there were some notable exceptions. One "beginning teacher" reported having taught for 13 years in Prince Edward Island and 2 years in the Northwest Territories before moving to District 2. Another in District 14 had taught for 14 years in another district in the province. Still another in District 18 had taught in the Community College system for 16 years before coming into the public system to teach art for the first time.

Six of the twelve districts reported that more than 60% of their "beginning teachers" had previous teaching experience. The highest was District 14 with 75%, followed by District 2 with 73%. Only District 15 (Bathurst) reported that all of its beginning teachers were new to the profession.

The percentage of inexperienced new teachers compared to new teachers with previous teaching experience has declined in each of the last three years. In 1998 the figure was 58%; in 1999 it was 50.3 %; this year (2000) it is 41.2%. Part of the reason for the decline this year may be attributed to a decision by the Steering Committee to allow long-term supply teachers to be included in the Program when they are "being used to fill a planned vacancy" and when "the teacher would be in place in that position for at least one full term or semester" (September 15, 1999 memo from T. Hanley). It may also be an indication that, as more older teachers retire, increasing numbers of teachers who have been supply teaching without contracts are finally moving into the teaching profession .

Table 3, which follows, provides a comparison of the numbers of induction partnerships in each of the school districts during the past five years.

Table 3

Distribution of induction pairs among the anglophone school districts during the five years of the provincial BTIP

school district	number of induction pairs per school year				
	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00
2	40	36	41	22	22
4	14	5	15	14	9
6	1	4	21	7	12
8	20	18	30	39	36
10	5	5	21	11	40
12	7	5	16	28	20*
13	5	9	10	23	31*
14	3	10	11	10	6
15	7	2	2	7	9
16	4	5	18	22	22
17	15	12	11	24	31
18	35	14	14	33	28

The total number of induction partnerships this year was 266. The lowest number was six in District 14; the highest was forty in District 10 (the district from which primary data is missing from beginning teachers, mentors, and principals). The average per district was 22.2. This compares to 21 last year and to 17.5 in 1998.

The asterisks beside the number of partnerships in Districts 12 and 13 indicate that these districts included additional teachers who did not qualify as "beginning teachers" under the provincial guidelines. It is impossible to identify them among the returned questionnaires, so they are included in the grand total of participants. District 12 has been a pioneer for including long-term supply teachers in the BTIP. However, since they were not teaching for a full term,

they were ineligible for financial assistance under the provincial formula. Consequently, the districts agreed to supplement their BTIP budgets using other funds. This year the discrepancy between the official Department of Education and the District figures implies five additions in District 12 and six additions in District 13.

Professional Activities Supporting the BTIP

Beginning in the1998-99 school year the Selection Committee decided that initial training for mentors and beginning teachers should move from the provincial to the district or superintendency level. Nevertheless, the purpose remained the same: to inform participants about the expectations of the BTIP, to provide an opportunity to hear from successful beginning teacher-mentor pairs from the previous year, and to teach mentors skills which will facilitate their roles.

District Level Activities. This year all twelve district coordinators held initial training sessions, but the formats, timing, and focus varied somewhat. As occurred the previous year, several districts in the same superintendency held combined workshops. Districts 2 and 4, 6 and 8, 12 and 13, 17 and 18 collaborated on some of their activities. A different kind of collaboration occurred in Districts 6 and 8 (a single superintendency) where one person coordinated BTIP activities in both school districts. Altogether, she was responsible for 48 partnerships.

This year several orientation workshops were organized before school began. Four districts reported offering summer workshops for beginning teachers only, as part of the Department of Education's Summer Institute Program. Then, in September or early October, the same four districts organized separate training sessions for mentors. Six districts held joint training sessions for both beginning teachers and mentors in either September or October. Others, like Districts 17 and 18, preferred to keep the groups separate for the initial orientation. Their mentors received a full day of training; beginning teachers a half day. Eight districts invited district administrators to their orientation session; only District 14 reported inviting school administrators.

All of the coordinators felt they had been able to recruit sufficient competent mentors in their districts. Approximately one in four mentors had served in this capacity before; five had served twice, and three had served for three years.

Eight districts reported that they needed to select a total of 30 mentors after their initial training sessions were finished. This means that approximately 89% of the participants had been identified prior to the training workshops. Although it was difficult to accurately judge attendance at the initial training sessions, rough calculations suggest that approximately 88 percent of the participants attended sessions organized for them. This figure is slightly higher than the previous year (84%). This represented almost all of the mentors and beginning teachers who had been identified at the time of the sessions. Attendance was consistently high in all of the districts.

It was evident from the survey returns that coordinators went to great lengths to meet with all participants. In District 10, it was necessary to hold workshops in three areas - the eastern section, the western section, and on the island of Grand Manan. In District 18, the coordinator visited mentors in rural schools which had multiple sets of partners because it was impossible to obtain enough supply teachers to cover all mentors' classrooms during the district orientation workshop.

The initial workshop agendas included an overview of the BTIP and an introduction to the Program manual - A Guide to the New Brunswick Beginning Teacher Induction Program: A Partnership that Builds Success. Besides containing suggestions and guidelines for all participants, the manual specifies five general goals for beginning teachers: orientation to the profession, self-assessment and self-evaluation, moral and practical support, acquisition and refinement of teaching skills, and development of a philosophy of education.

The chairperson of the Steering Committee also encouraged coordinators to utilize Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching, (Danielson,1996) as a resource which mentors could use to examine the elements of teaching with their partners. Data from the beginning teachers' survey indicated that it was introduced to approximately 82% of them; 45% rated it very useful; 32% suggested it was somewhat useful; 1% found it useless; 21% were unable to comment. Other resources which beginning teachers listed as being useful were videos on the opening day of school produced by Harry Wong (mentioned 20 times), Quantum Teaching, (DePorter et al, 1999) with ten mentions, various books on classroom management (e.g. Quand les enfants s'en melent) were listed 8 times, The Skillful Teacher, (Saphier & Gower, 1987) was mentioned six times.

Mentors were invited to comment on the usefulness of the training sessions organized to prepare them for their role. All of the 76 comments received were positive. A representative sample follows. A mentor in District 2 wrote, "I didn't know what to expect; the meeting cleared everything up for me." Another in neighbouring District 4 felt that " the workshop gave us ideas on activities we could do together and ideas how to wisely spend the funds allocated to us." A District 8 mentor said that "hearing success stories from previous years helped me to better understand how the BTIP can be useful". A mentor from District 13 commented that she "loved the Harry Wong stuff", while her counterpart in District 17 observed that the "binder is well done - session was clear and concise". The reflective nature of mentoring was evident in the comments of a mentor in District 18 who wrote that "the program gave me the opportunity to appreciate and realize how much a beginning teacher must learn in a very short time. Experienced teachers become caught up in their routine. This allowed me to step back.". A teacher with previous mentor experience, while positive about the training, hinted that the training is most useful to first-time mentors: "Because I had been a mentor before, it was a nice review. More valuable, I'm sure to the first time mentors."

The data indicate that, following the initial training workshops for mentors or mentors and beginning teachers, all but one of the coordinators organized additional district-wide meetings for both beginning teachers and mentors. Five districts organized two supplementary meetings; three districts held three additional sessions. Generally these sessions consisted of variations on several

themes: mid-point evaluations; professional development; time for partners to plan activities, exchange information, and socialize. Most districts celebrated their success with a social event near the end of the school year. Beginning teachers were asked to rate as "very useful, satisfactory, or useless", all of the activities in which they participated to achieve the goals of the BTIP. With only two exceptions, all of the 182 respondents rated the activities organized for them at the district level as either satisfactory (28%) or very useful (71.8%) - a remarkable record of success! Furthermore, a review by the researcher of the listed activities led to the conclusion that the level of professional activities organized by the coordinators remained consistent and comprehensive, as has been the case in the previous two years.

Local School Level Activities. Despite the importance of the activities organized at the district level, the largest number of BTIP activities occurred at the local school level and involved both the mentors and the beginning teachers. In their questionnaire, beginning teachers were asked to indicate the approximate frequency with which they participated in specific activities associated with induction programs. This list of typical induction activities was developed from earlier BTIP studies in New Brunswick and from a review of the literature on teacher induction and mentoring programs. These percentage participation rates, displayed in Tables 4 and 5, provide a comprehensive picture of the scope and concentration of professional activities pursued by the mentor-beginning teacher partners. Since 1997 this data has been separated into activities which present either lower or higher emotional and professional risks to the participants.

Table 4 examines participation rates in seven activities which represent lower risk to teachers. Because these activities do not require any special training, teachers generally feel more comfortable participating in them. All these activities require informal contacts and involve discussions of daily educational concerns. The table compares the rates of participation for the 1999-2000 school year to the four previous years. For analyses of statistical significance, the current figures (2000) were compared only to those collected in1999. The number of respondents used for the calculation was the number who replied to an individual question. This varied between 176 and 183.

Since these are relatively lower-risk activities, one would expect high rates of participation and hence very low rates of non-involvement. When this is the case, the percentages appearing in the first frequency column, will approach zero. The slightly higher figures in the 2000 survey indicate lower rates of participation in activities 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7. For example, in the first listed activity, "make informal contact with mentor", the change from 0.5% in 1999 to 2.2% in 2000 is calculated from the finding that four respondents this year did not have contact with their mentor, compared to only one the previous year. (Each 0.6 percent represents one respondent in the 2000 figures.) However, if one moves to the far-right column, the 82% of respondents who made contact with their mentor more than ten times is similar to the previous year. Overall there was not a significant change in this activity. The activities which came closest to statistical significance were "sharing teaching materials" ($p = .10$) and "discussing classroom management techniques" ($p = .16$). However, a statistical analysis showed that there were not any statistically significant changes in any of the Table 4 activities from 1999 to 2000. This means that there was little change from one year to another in any of these low-risk activities.

Table 4

A percentage comparison of beginning teachers' participation rates for specific lower-risk professional activities during the 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000 Induction Programs

		Frequency				
Professional Activities		**0**	**1 - 5**	**6-10**	**>10**	***p < 0.05 ****p < 0.01**
1. Make informal contacts with mentor at school	**2000**	2.2	5.6	10	82	
	1999	0.5	6.8	10	81.7	
	1998	1.2	10.5	8.1	80.2	
	1997	1.6	3.2	4.8	90.6	
	1996	4.6	12.3	12.3	70.4	
2. Discuss teaching ideas or strategies	**2000**	0.6	16.1	22.2	61.1	
	1999	2.5	14.7	30.4	53.4	
	1998	2.3	20.3	23.8	53.5	
	1997	0	11.7	20	68.3	
	1996	3.1	27.5	23	45.9	
3. Share or research teaching materials, books, etc	**2000**	4.5	28.5	17.9	49.2	
	1999	4.2	24.1	28.3	41.4	
	1998	10.5	32.5	19.8	37.2	
	1997	1.6	20.6	33.3	44.4	
	1996	10.7	33.7	16.8	38.2	
4. Discuss curriculum or lesson planning	**2000**	3.3	21.1	26.6	49.4	
	1999	2.6	23.6	31.4	40.8	
	1998	7.6	33.3	22.8	36.2	
	1997	3.2	19.4	22.6	54.8	
	1996	10.7	33.7	19.9	35.2	
5. Discuss student assessment or reporting	**2000**	2.2	28.3	32.8	36.7	
	1999	2.1	29.8	30.9	35.6	
	1998	10.5	37.2	22.7	29.6	
	1997	1.6	27.4	25.8	45.2	
	1996	12.7	30.2	23.8	33.3	

Professional Activities		Frequency 0	1 - 5	6-10	>10	*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01
6. Discuss classroom management techniques	2000	3.9	30.4	28.2	37.6	
	1999	6.8	30.4	33	27.2	
	1998	7.6	31	28.7	32.7	
	1997	0	20.6	27	52.4	
	1996	6.3	36.5	27	30.2	
7. Discuss administrative policies or procedures	2000	6.2	36.9	27.4	29.6	
	1999	5.8	37.2	25.7	28.8	
	1998	9.3	39.5	26.2	25	
	1997	1.6	30.6	22.6	45.2	
	1996	6.2	40.6	21.9	23.4	

The activities listed in Table 5 place higher emotional and professional demands on the participants and may be termed higher-risk activities. This is because traditionally teaching has been an isolated activity which one performed alone, except for occasional supervision from a principal or supervisor. With the exception of the first activity, Table 5 describes activities which involve observing colleagues teach, being observed in the teaching act, or receiving feedback (conferencing) about one's teaching. Perhaps because of its association with supervision and possible criticism, many teachers are reluctant to invite colleagues into their classroom. Consequently, higher percentages of non-participation (the zero column) and lower percentages in the last column (participation greater than 10) can be expected in this table than was the case in Table 4.

A review of the first column of figures (non-participation) will reveal that in every case the 2000 figures are higher than the figures for 1999. This indicates that beginning teachers felt that these activities happened less often than the previous year. Yet, if one looks further back in the record, it appears that the rate of non-participation is quite similar to the years before 1999. If the reader glances down the far-right column(> 10), slight improvements can be seen in two activities and slight declines in three others. The greatest change occurred in the decreased number of times that mentors observed beginning teachers in their classrooms. This was the only item which proved to be statistically significant and unfortunately, it was significant in a negative sense. Closely related to this activity was the lower number of times mentors provided feedback to their partners. This correlation of 0.09 was close to statistical significance. As one might expect given the previous changes, fewer mentors participated in any classroom observations. In fact, nearly 20% more mentors than last year did not make any observations, while the percentage who observed their partners more than 10 times also declined by 1.8 percent.

Table 5

A percentage comparison of beginning teachers' participation rates in specific high-risk professional activities during the 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999 and 2000 BTIP

Professional Activities		Frequency 0	1 - 5	6-10	>10	*p < 0.05 **p < 0.01
1. Meet mentor in scheduled (formal) setting	2000	8.5	54.2	19.8	17.5	
	1999	8.4	50.8	22.5	16.8	
	1998	17	52.3	17.6	13.1	
	1997	14.5	51.6	12.9	21	
	1996	15.3	71.9	4.6	7.6	
2. Receive feedback about my teaching from mentor	2000	25	44.3	12.5	18.2	
	1999	16.8	52.4	13.6	14.1	
	1998	26.2	44.2	13.9	15.7	
	1997	27.4	38.7	16.1	17.7	
	1996	27	50.8	15.9	6.3	
3. Mentor observes me teach	2000	47	38.1	6.1	7.2	
	1999	28.8	50.8	6.8	10	**
	1998	41.5	45	8.2	5.3	
	1997	46.8	35.5	8.1	9.7	
	1996	46	46	7.9	3.2	
4. Observe other colleagues teaching (not mentor)	2000	27.5	57.3	10.7	4.7	
	1999	22.5	58.6	10	6.8	
	1998	28.4	58.6	8.3	4.7	
	1997	22.6	62.9	8.1	6.4	
	1996	50	39.1	0	10.9	
5. Observe my mentor teaching in his/her own class	2000	37.4	46.2	6.6	9.9	
	1999	24.1	52.9	8.4	10.5	
	1998	43.8	42.6	7.7	5.9	
	1997	41.9	35.5	12.9	9.7	
	1996	51.6	40.3	0	8.1	

Overall, the results suggest that about 53% of the mentors observed their partner teach at least once, yet 75% provided them with feedback about their teaching. This interesting inconsistency in behaviour has been noted in previous years' data. From another perspective,

beginning teachers reported that 47% of the mentors did not observe them teach and 25% did not provide any feedback. Also, increased numbers of mentors (37.4% compared to 24.1%) were unwilling to invite their partners into their own classrooms to observe them. Although this appears to be a tendency which the Steering Committee will interpret as regressive, the non-compliance rate is not as high as it was during the early years of the Program.

Beginning teachers were asked to indicate which of the activities, listed in both Tables 4 and 5, they wished had occurred more often. As was the case in the three previous reports, every one of the top four activities selected by the new teachers appears on the list of higher-risk activities in Table 5. In 2000, the activity which the highest percentage (24.7%) wished had occurred more frequently was observing other colleagues teaching (26% in 1999). The second choice was "observing my mentor teaching in his/her own class" (22.5% compared to 20% in 1999); "mentor observes me teach" was third at 21% (22.5% in 1999); "receive feedback about my teaching from mentor" remained fourth with 15.9% (16 percent in 1999). Overall, these results have shown a remarkable consistency from year to year.

In addition to the activities listed in the two tables, the beginning teachers' survey asked how often there had been opportunities to meet other beginning teachers who were participating in the Program. The data suggest that approximately 80% of the new teachers had at least one opportunity to meet their peers, a slight decrease from 85% a year earlier. Eleven percent reported that they had more than ten social opportunities of this nature. Participants appeared to place moderate value on this activity since after the four activities listed above, this was the activity which received the fifth highest number of requests (10 percent).

Beginning teachers were also asked whether they met with their mentors on a social basis out of school. Approximately 74% of the beginning teachers, compared to 78% in 1999, reported that this occurred at least once; 9.5% percent wished it had happened more often. These figures can be compared to the data for the first activity in Table 5 which suggest that approximately 91% of the partners met on a regular basis; 8.5% wished such meetings had happened more frequently. While it may not be possible to draw clear conclusions from these figures, they do provide some evidence that beginning teachers value both formal and informal opportunities to meet with their mentors.

Participants' Perspectives on the Program: Strengths and Weaknesses

Each group was asked whether they recommended the continuation of the BTIP. While principals were asked to respond with a simple "yes" or "no", the other three groups were asked to indicate the degree of their support on a four-point Likert-style scale. If respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed", then this was interpreted as a "yes"; if they "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed", then it translated to a "no". Table 6 provides a five-year comparison of responses.

Table 6 reflects strong overall support for the continuation of the BTIP from all participating groups. The asterisks draw attention to the fact that questionnaires were never distributed to beginning teachers, mentors, or principals in District 10. Hence, the figures represent only 11 of the 12 districts. The calculation of the percentage was based on the number

who responded to this question. Hence, the first three figures reflect the provincial average without District 10. This is significant since this district had the largest number of beginning teachers (15% of the total).

Table 6

A five-year comparison of recommendations for continuation of the BTIP by beginning teachers, mentors, principals, and district coordinators

Group Respondents	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Beginning Teachers	98.3 %	100 %	94.5 %	98.8 %	98.9%*
Mentors	91.8	100	96.1	97.7	99.4*
Principals	90	100	98.8	98	100*
District Coordinators	100	100	100	100	100

* District 10 responses missing

The responses of the beginning teachers and mentors to the Likert-style questions reveal the strength of the support for the recommendation. Approximately 71.3% of beginning teacher respondents "strongly agreed" with the program recommendation statement; 27.6 % "agreed" with the statement. These figures compare to 73% and 26.2% in 1999. For mentors, the 2000 figures were 64.9 % (strongly agreed) and 34.5 % (agreed), compared to 67.3 and 30.4 in 1999. Despite the absence of input from participants in District 10 in three of the four categories, this is a very strong, consistent recommendation for the continuation and overall endorsement of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program.

Beginning Teachers' Perspectives

In the 2000 survey, 98.3 % of the beginning teachers indicated they either agreed (40%) or strongly agreed (58.3%) with the statement, " I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me as a beginning teacher". This is a slight increase over the results of the 1999 survey when 95.7 % of the beginning teachers indicated they either agreed (41.1%) or strongly agreed (54.6%) with the statement. The consistency between the perceptions of the mentors and the beginning teachers on the question of whether the latter had benefited from the BTIP is interesting to note. Mentors indicated that, from their perspective, 96.5 % of their partners had a beneficial experience. The latter statistic is identical to 1999. While one could speculate as to which perspective is likely to be more accurate, there is really very little difference between the two figures. From an individual perspective, only three of 180 beginning teachers who responded felt that the Program had not been beneficial to them; mentors indicated five. These cases will be examined in the next section.

Benefits to Beginning Teachers. In their survey, beginning teachers were invited to comment on any of their BTIP experiences. These remarks provide some insight into why such a large

majority felt so positive about this program. Although their observations evoque similar themes to previous reports, it is important to include some of the more representative ones, so their voices can be heard:

> I'd like to say that I really appreciated the chance to have a mentor this year. I can't count the times that my mentor gave me advice/suggestions or just listened when I really needed to vent. I think it really helps one to feel that there is someone to go to when things got a bit pressured or just to talk.
>
> - District 16 Beginning Teacher

> Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the BTIP Program. The most productive times that my mentor and I had were the days given to us to work together on portfolios, observation of other schools, and sharing resources and teaching strategies. I knew my mentor was always there for me which is comforting as a beginning teacher or even a more skilful one.
>
> - District 6 Beginning Teacher

> [I was] very compatible with my mentor. We met regularly to discuss curriculum activities and management techniques. I used the resource Enhancing Professional Practice and found this text useful. I had an enjoyable year and I am grateful to be able to participate in this program.
>
> - District 13 Beginning Teacher

> The BTIP program has been an excellent experience for me this year. I feel all teachers should be involved in this program for at least 1 - 2 years. It made me feel more at ease knowing I had someone to talk to and help me with any questions or concerns.
>
> - District 8 Beginning Teacher

A new teacher in District 13 with previous experience elsewhere, wrote, "I feel it is a very good program. Even as an experienced teacher, teaching grade 1 French immersion was so totally new and different, having such a good mentor helped me feel I was doing a good job and doing my best".

Unsuccessful Partnerships. Even though they are few in number, it is useful to examine the unsuccessful partnerships, since the reasons they failed may describe situations which can be avoided in the future. The three unsuccessful cases identified by the beginning teachers in the 2000 program are each quite different. Mentors, in their survey, identified five partners whom they felt had not benefited from the Program. Since only one of the three examined here appears to overlap with those identified by the mentors, what constitutes a successful partnership may be a matter of perspective. Statistically, 1.7% of 265 beginning teachers translates to approximately five unsuccessful cases; hence, 4 - 7 would be a reasonable range to expect.

Case number one involves a male beginning teacher who had five years of previous teaching experience, much of it overseas. His profile indicates that he met with his mentor more than ten times and discussed various topics related to teaching. He and his mentor did not engage in mutual classroom observations, conferencing, or observations of other colleagues. Although he recommended the continuation of the BTIP , he commented that "I believe this program would be beneficial to new teachers". This implies that he felt he did not belong in this program and consequently had not benefited personally. A frustrated mentor in the same district who appears to have been paired with this individual, agreed that his partner had not benefited "because my partner didn't want to be in this program."

The second case also involved a male teacher, this one was a recent graduate. He had more than ten informal contacts with his mentor and from one to five teaching-related discussions. This teacher explained that he and his mentor did not observe one another or provide feedback on teaching because he could not spare the time from other commitments. He further explained that because of a heavy sports commitment, he was generally in the gymnasium four nights a week and away on week-ends. He suggested that because of this commitment and the fact that he was teaching six different high school courses, this program might have been more beneficial in his second or third year. Although he felt that he had not benefited personally, this new teacher strongly agreed that the program should be continued. Evidently he felt that his circumstances made it impossible for him to take full advantage of the opportunities available.

The third case centres on a female beginning teacher who had one year previous teaching experience outside the public system. She appeared to participate fully in the district-organized activities and rated them as either "satisfactory" or "very useful". She had many informal contacts and teaching discussions with her mentor. She met her mentor socially outside of school and she also met with other BTIP participants. She indicated that she was satisfied with this level of activity. She identified three conditions which caused problems for her during the year: unclear expectations for the BTIP, a different teaching assignment than her mentor, and no common preparation periods with her mentor. This teacher indicated that the latter two conditions caused significant problems for her. In the space for suggestions, this teacher listed "classroom management". This may be a clue to other problems that she encountered or to a lack of support in this area. This, however, is speculation only. It is not clear why this teacher felt she did not benefit from the program. She did, however, agree that the Program should be continued.

Mentors described five situations in which they felt the beginning teacher had not benefited from the BTIP. Case one, above, was one of them. The other four seem to be different than the cases described. In one of these, which I will refer to as case four, the new teacher missed most of the activities because she went on maternity leave for five months. In a fifth case, a new mentor who missed the orientation workshop was paired with a teacher with five years teaching experience. Despite this, the mentor felt she had personally benefited from the Program, but that her partner had not. No reason was stated. Case six involves a mentor with a similar profile and a partner with four or five years experience. The mentor articulated her belief that the BTIP was not designed for someone with the experience this teacher had. Consequently, rather

than follow the designated program, they had "learned from each other". She emphasized that she was recommending the continuation of the BTIP only for teachers who were new to the profession. In the final case, a new mentor who attended the initial orientation was paired with an inexperienced beginning teacher. She particularly enjoyed being a role model for her colleague, but she found it difficult to find the time to do a satisfactory job. She wrote, "Unfortunately, because of schedules that did not match, different teaching loads and the physical location in the building, and time, I feel that I have not done as good of a job acting as a mentor as I could have." This mentor felt that although neither she nor her partner had benefited from their participation, the Program should be continued.

Persistent Problems. The problems encountered at the local level by beginning teachers and mentors in the BTIP or other induction programs are reasonably well known from previous studies and from the literature. An important purpose of this item in the survey is to determine the extent to which progress is being made in addressing these obstacles. Beginning teachers were asked to indicate which of the conditions listed in Table 7 caused problems for them during the term of the program. By comparing the percentages of teachers who experienced specific difficulties this year with the figures for previous years, it is possible to see whether overall progress is being made and which particular conditions need to be addressed.

Table 7

A comparison of the percentage of beginning teachers in the 1997, 1998, 1999, and 2000 induction programs who reported experiencing specific problems

condition causing problems	1997	1998	1999	2000
lack of time	60 %	67.8 %	66 %	57%
different teaching assignment to mentor	22	30.4	29.3	23.6
location of classroom relative to mentors	15	5.5	12.6	13
other (unique situations)	15	12.1	11	7.7
difficulty accessing BTIP funds	22	29.3	11	4.4
unclear expectations for BTIP	19	17.2	4.7	1.7
personal incompatibility with mentor	0	1.7	2.1	0.6

The perennial top two problem areas for induction partners remain lack of time and different teaching assignments. These findings are consistent with the literature in other jurisdictions (Ganser, 1996; Huffman & Leak, 1986). It is interesting to note that the figures for "difficulty accessing BTIP funds" and "unclear expectations for BTIP" have continued to decline. Furthermore, no one felt these conditions caused significant problems for them. This will be particularly gratifying to the Steering Committee which made a concentrated effort over the past two years to address these two conditions.

Although a slight decline was noted in the percentage of respondents who felt they didn't have as much time for the BTIP as they needed, twenty-seven of the 104 individuals (26%) felt that lack of time created significant difficulties for them. Eight of the 43 teachers (18.6%) who complained about different teaching assignments from their mentors indicated this caused significant problems; three of twenty-four or 12.5% indicated inconvenient room location created major problems for them. It may be difficult to achieve further improvements in these three areas, given the nature of the problems which cause them. Since the solution to all of them must involve school administrators, possibly the most prudent course of action is to continue to encourage discussion of ways that these obstacles can be alleviated through the increased involvement and early intervention of local administrators.

A year ago many teachers lamented that the shortage of supply teachers made it difficult or impossible to take time from teaching to meet or to observe others. This year, only one beginning teacher mentioned this problem in the "other" category. Has the supply teacher shortage been solved? A more frequent complaint was being required to change schools during the school year. Other problems mentioned included difficulty scheduling meetings when either a mentor or beginning teacher worked part-time. One particularly conscientious teacher found it difficult to take her allotted days because she was concerned about spending too much time away from her class.

Mentors' Perspectives

Mentors generally are teachers with at least five years' teaching experience, strong interpersonal skills, and a reputation for better-than-average teaching ability. Although most are volunteers, it is not uncommon for administrators to recruit them. This year, 75% were first-time mentors. The previous year the figure was higher, at 80%. Twenty-three of the respondents were mentors for the second time, five for the third time, and three were in their fourth year.

Although significant numbers are willing to repeat as a mentor, it is obvious that each year the BTIP provides a new and unique professional development opportunity to large numbers of experienced teachers. Their perspective on the impact of the Program both on themselves and on their partners, is very important.

Benefits to Mentors. Although both the expressed and the intended purpose of the BTIP is to support beginning teachers, the mentor survey data indicate clearly that mentors feel they also are beneficiaries of the Program. Possibly the strongest evidence of this is the finding that 96.5% of the mentors agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, "I feel that overall the BTIP has been beneficial to me from a professional perspective". This represents a slight decline from the figure of 98.2% recorded in 1999. Translated into individual teachers, this means that 166 out of 171 respondents felt that they had personally and professionally benefited from their involvement. Unsuccessful situations will be examined after we look at the experiences of this large majority.

The mentors' survey asked what had been the positive aspects of being a mentor teacher in the BTIP. This year the many responses to this question seemed to indicate there were four main themes, one of which contained five sub-themes:

1. Professional Growth and Development
   - reflection on best practices
   - collaboration with colleagues
   - gaining new ideas from partners
   - observations in other classrooms
   - access to resources and funds

2. Personal Satisfaction

3. Motivation

4. Friendship

The extent to which the BTIP provided mentors with opportunities for **professional growth and development** was very evident in the mentors' comments. This comprehensive theme encompassed a variety of related categories which have been classified as sub-themes. Many mentors found that having to explain classroom routines and strategies to a new teacher forced them to re-examine their own practices and to **reflect on best practices**. This self-evaluation resulted in personal insights which helped them develop professionally. In addition, their exposure to opportunities as participants in the BTIP further encouraged their professional development. The following quotations attempt to capture the reflective nature of this sub-theme.

A mentor in District 6 said, "I enjoyed this program. It really has been a wake-up call for me. It made me look closely at our curriculum guides and I enjoyed sharing ideas with her." Another in District 8 wrote that it "gave me an incentive to re-evaluate and look at my methods and attitude." A District 13 mentor expressed similar feelings: "It made me stop and think about how I did things. Many things concerning classroom management and discipline I did automatically; now I was forced to verbalize." Another mentor wrote:

> [My partner] and I had the opportunity to use our days to discuss many educational topics, concerns. Example - assessment, professional portfolios; It was wonderful to have the time to stop and reflect.
>
> - District 8 Mentor

The second sub-theme, **collaboration with a colleague**, refers to a second aspect of professional development which mentors valued highly. Most often, the colleague was their partner, but sometimes BTIP participation led to other connections, as the last part of this quotation suggests:

> I have had to examine my methods. I have had to defend my actions and suggestions for educational soundness. I have been of use to the beginning teacher and wish I'd had a mentor when I began. I met peer and newer teachers, increasing the network.
>
> - District 18 Mentor

Another mentor in the same district wrote that it was "great to work with someone else. We were able to work on several multi-age projects and themes together". Several expressed satisfaction because they had time to share professional concerns with a colleague and felt they were "part of a team". Phrases like "two heads are better than one" and having "a sounding board who has the same background as me" occurred frequently in various forms. Clearly, mentors valued the opportunities for collaboration which the Program encouraged and provided.

It should not come as any surprise that, year after year, mentors report that they learn many **new teaching ideas** from their less experienced partners. Sub-theme three, highlights the observation that mentors received benefits from their partners as well as gave them. This comment from a mentor in school district 6 reflected the expressed feelings of many.

> "For me the positive aspect of being a mentor was that I learned as much, if not more, than my mentee. I discovered new ideas, new methods, etc."

No doubt some of this exchange of new ideas also resulted from **mentors' visits to other schools and classrooms**. Although the mentor surveys do not provide direct evidence of the extent to which this occurred, Table 5 implies that about half the mentors observed their partners; in addition, mentors' comments indicate that many accompanied their partners on visits to other schools. So many mentors mentioned the value of these visits, that it was included as a sub-theme of professional development and growth.

A final sub-theme was **access to new resources and funds** for professional development. Almost all mentors received copies of the text by Danielson, (1996) Enhancing Professional Practice: A framework for teaching, and shown how to use it to assist their partners. Different coordinators also purchased various resources which proved beneficial to both the beginning teachers and their mentors. Videos on mentoring the new teacher and the opening days of school were available through the audio-visual section of the Instructional Resources Branch of the Department of Education; some partners attended professional workshops related to their specialization. Although most districts restricted teachers' direct access to funds, Districts 2 and 4 appear to have allowed partners to order instructional materials for personal use in their classrooms. Mentors in these districts appreciated this benefit.

The **personal satisfaction** which mentors experienced by being able to help a new colleague was a second theme which emerged from their comments. This theme illustrates the strong sense of personal satisfaction mentors felt when sharing their expertise with less-

experienced colleagues. One called the experience "very fulfilling personally"; another wrote that the most positive aspect of being a mentor had been "having a specific teacher who depends on you - feeling needed". Another said, "It makes you feel useful". This longer quotation captured the feelings which accompanied many of the comments in this category:

> I was glad to be there for my mentee when she called on me for advice.
> It made me feel good to know that someone relied on my help and guidance.
> I hope to have helped her through that first year with ease.
> - District 8 Mentor

Being able to contribute to the well-being of a colleague can also have a positive psychological impact on the helpers as well. These comments from two mentors in District 18 illustrate this point:

> [Being a mentor] helped me feel positive about my teaching and see myself as having something to offer another teacher beginning in the profession.
>
> I discovered that I did have something to offer.

A senior mentor in District 16 wrote that, "It's satisfying to be able to ease the adjustment of a young (or new) teacher and help him/her avoid some of the pitfalls. (I had an unofficial mentor 28 years ago and probably would not have survived without her)." Another mentor who will retire next year expressed her personal satisfaction at knowing that her expertise would not be lost.

> I have really enjoyed having someone to work with, and since I'm retiring, it helped to give me a good feeling about passing on ideas that might be helpful to a beginning teacher. . . .This experience was a great confidence builder as more experienced teachers often take classroom management skills for granted.
> - District 8 Mentor

Mentors found that the enthusiasm of their younger colleagues provided a source of motivation for them. This represents a third theme eloquently expressed in this quotation:

> I have really enjoyed sharing and helping a younger teacher. As an older teacher, their enthusiasm and youthfulness is exciting and I found it helpful to me, as I hope I was to the BT.
> - District 2 Mentor

Although several mentors commented on the enthusiasm of their partners, the following quotation successfully describes why many mentors found it enervating and inspirational.

> [The BTIP was] a rejuvenation, a reaffirmation of my beliefs, my passion for teaching. What a joy to share it with someone who's eager, who cares, who wants to benefit from my mistakes.
>
> - District 12 Mentor

The fourth and final theme, **friendship**, also related to the theme of collegiality, but it has a less professional tone to it. Although clearly of lower priority than professional development, sufficient numbers of mentors mentioned the importance of friendships which grew out of the BTIP, that it deserves theme status. One friendship which developed was between a mentor and a former student:

> My BT is a former student. It was fun working with her in a different capacity. I also learned new strategies and have picked up new ideas from her. The personal contact was the best part.
>
> - District 12 Mentor

Another mentor, this time in District 2, wrote that the best part of the BTIP was "making a new acquaintance, sharing info (both ways), enjoying a pleasant person. The thoughtfulness of showing an interest in these new people was a positive gesture."

The overall conclusion has to be that mentors believed that they gained as well as contributed to their partnership with their beginning teachers. If this was not the case, it is unlikely that 90.6% would have indicated they were willing to act as a mentor another time. This is a slight increase from the figure of 86.8% in 1999 and strong evidence of the value of this program to mentors as well as to beginning teachers.

Persistent Problems. Mentors were asked, "What aspects of being a mentor have you disliked?" Fifty-nine percent indicated they did not dislike anything about the Program. However, the remainder identified a number of problems, many similar to their partners.

Finding sufficient time to do all the activities expected was the most persistent problem reported by the mentors. One mentor wrote, "My workload is heavy as it is. I really couldn't afford the time." However, this mentor's comment was more typical:

> Even though the budget allowed us time to meet, we still found it difficult to get those few minutes each day. I disliked not being able to touch base as often as I should have.
>
> - District 16 Mentor

A mentor in District 13, whom it appears was responsible for two beginning teachers, succinctly identified her frustration and made a helpful suggestion:

> Limited time. Not getting the resources. Hard to devote yourself to two people and do your own thing. Have training in the early weeks or train mentors in the spring.

While early training might eliminate meeting in the hectic early weeks of school, a mentor in District 17 pointed out that sharing common preparation time means a great deal to partners.

While most of the comments were variations on those described above, the problem of insufficient time also has a second side to it, as these remarks indicate:

> I felt sometimes I wasn't present enough on a daily basis as I was also focussing on my own teaching. (It was my first year at a new grade level.)
>
> - District 2 Mentor

> One problem for me is that I had to be away from my classroom. I found this difficult as little ones are hard to part from, especially at the beginning of the year.
>
> - District 13 Mentor

In addition, several mentors observed that taking time from teaching to work with one's partner requires extra time because of the need to prepare for a supply teacher, if one could be found. Two mentors complained that sometimes this was compounded by "pressure from the office regarding the difficulties of getting supply teachers when we were out". This was interpreted to mean that sometimes when a mentor asked an administrator to find a replacement, they were discouraged from asking because of the difficulty of finding supply teachers.

Another mentor pointed to the obvious benefits of a well-located partnership, while illustrating that all staff can play a role in supporting new teachers.

> It isn't really a dislike, but the BT and M should be as physically close as possible. I had a BT across the hall who had no computer experience. His mentor was on the other side of the building and he always came to me for help. There were other things besides the computer though that he needed help with.
>
> - District 13 Mentor

The difficulty of finding appropriate partners for subject teachers and specialists has been identified before and has being addressed by a sub-committee of the Steering Committee. Although their recommendations re-affirmed that there is a generic base for mentors which does not depend on subject or grade expertise, several of this year's mentors apparently have not yet adopted that position. Several mentors wrote that they had "inadequate feelings caused by [their] lack of expertise" in their partners' specialty. Location with regard to one's partner was another relatively common problem. One can sense the double frustration in this mentor's remark:

> We have nothing in common on a professional level. We are at opposite ends of the building and tech is vastly different from what I teach.
>
> - District 8 Mentor

The difficulties of itinerant specialists came up most often. A mentor in district 8 wrote, "As a specialist, we are not teaching in the same school and therefore we were not able to get together much". Yet if specialists are not matched with mentors with similar background, you get the situation described by this mentor:

> Since I am in resource, rather than guidance, I did worry about how much help I was able to offer her. Two positions the same would be better.
>
> - District 4 Mentor

Perhaps the best response to these relatively isolated but difficult problems is to acknowledge them in the orientation workshops, to reinforce the common ground which teachers share, and to support the recommendations of the sub-committee to both encourage alternative ways for itinerant teachers to relate to one another and to find unofficial 'mentors' in each school where they teach.

Two previously identified persistent problems seem to have become less of a problem this year. For the first time, no one mentioned that a person in a position of responsibility was acting as a mentor. If true, this is noteworthy.

Scheduling meetings for partners was less of a problem this year than previously. In one district several complained that supper meetings interfered with home life and added to a long day, but generally it appears that district coordinators have taken Ganser's (1999) advice and planned meeting well in advance.

Although approximately 40% of the mentors reported some difficulties, for most mentors the overall experience was a positive one. Yet, it is important to remember that, for a few teachers, being a mentor turned out to be a negative experience. One in District 8, who had been a successful mentor before, wrote that "the experience with this partner was not positive. No effort on partner's part to make this program work for him." Another in the same district complained that the beginning teacher was "expecting everything on a silver platter - was not working to full potential. [I] had to detail and explain everything many times." A third found it difficult "telling the BT that she was doing the wrong thing. Being diplomatic."

Dealing with such extreme cases is always difficult. Their infrequency may not justify specific training for dealing with beginning teachers who are uncooperative, however, if district coordinators do not prepare mentors for handling such situations in their initial workshops, then they need to make it clear that they stand ready to provide assistance on an individual basis when requests are made.

Principals' Perspectives

In the 1999-2000 school year, one hundred fifty schools participated in the BTIP - twenty more than the previous year and a 13% increase. Each principal was sent a questionnaire

and asked to respond. This year the number of returns dropped from 78.5% in 1999 to 53.3%. No doubt the absence of any returns from District 10 contributed significantly to this decline.

The principals' questionnaire asked administrators to select the extent of their personal involvement in the BTIP from four categories: no involvement, minimal involvement, active involvement, and extensive involvement. A principal with no involvement is aware of the program but generally lacks detailed information and does not get directly involved with the participants. Minimal involvement describes principals who are aware of the program and who try to be supportive, but their actual involvement consists of peripheral contacts like passing on memos, making suggestions, or asking occasional questions about the program. The third level, active involvement, combines the characteristics described in category two with the active components of selecting mentors and/or arranging supply teachers for the partners. Finally, extensive involvement describes those principals who become very involved with the BTIP. In addition to category 3 activities, they attend and/or arrange meetings, debrief participants, and in extreme cases, act as mentors themselves. Table 8, which follows, compares the levels of involvement for this year's principals with the two previous years.

Table 8 suggests that principals were definitely more involved in the BTIP this year than in previous years. Part of this difference is likely due to a different method of determining percentages. Whereas this year each principal self-selected his/her category, in previous years, the researcher had determined which category each fell into, based on their description of their BTIP involvement.

Table 8

A three-year comparison of principal involvement in the BTIP

categories	percentage involvement		
	1997-98	1998-99	1999- 2000
1. No Involvement	30 %	39 %	3.3%
2. Minimal Involvement	33	31	42.5
3. Active Involvement	30	22	51.1
4. Extensive Involvement	8	7	3.3

Principals seemed reluctant to admit they were not involved; even the three who fell into category one pointed out that their vice-principals were responsible for the Program in their school. I suspect, however, that the 2000 figures more accurately reflect the actual situation than the older figures. Although this table suggests a re-configuration of how principals interacted with BTIP participants compared to previous years, it still indicates that most principals are moderately involved, as one might expect. A District 8 principal wrote, "There is a lot more awareness of the program now than in previous years. Much improved and valuable program." Another, humorously commented:

> I don't feel I was as involved as I could have been; however, I will blame it on the clock. It only goes to twelve twice. Dooze heurs!!!!!!!

A principal in another district seemed to reflect the feelings of most principals when he said:

> I do believe since the inception of this program, we as administrators are more in tune with their needs and struggles as new teachers. My mentors are quick to provide support to our new teachers and I feel the new teachers may feel more comfortable going to their mentor with problems or questions than coming to me.
>
> - District 13 Principal

As they had the previous year, principals were asked if they had received clear, comprehensive, and timely information regarding the BTIP during the school year. Eighty-five percent replied they had, similar to 1999. While 11% felt uninformed, many were contradicted by others in the same district who were well informed. It appears that although district coordinators have made an extra effort to communicate with principals, some still fell through the cracks.

When asked the open-ended question, "From your perspective, which elements of the BTIP do you think are working well?", principals responded in descending frequency, as follows:

1) the mentor-beginning teacher partnership (27 responses)
2) meeting and planning time for partners (26 responses)
3) the supportive environment (13)
4) observation in other teachers' classrooms (11)
5) resource allowance (8)
6) exchange of information (8)
7) development of collegial relationships (5)
8) professional development (3)
9) frees principals of responsibility (2)
10) Frameworks for Effective Teaching (2)
11) closing banquet (2)
12) flexibility (2)
13) mentors' role in curriculum delivery (1)
14) motivates mentors (1)

Principals were asked to identify which elements of the BTIP could be improved and how to do it. Responses were relatively few; there were no clear themes. The most frequently heard suggestions were similar to those from the mentors and beginning teachers: provide additional time; improve pairings with regard to location and teaching assignment. Unlike last year when several principals objected to the time mentor and beginning teachers were away from class, this

was not an issue in the 2000 survey. Several principals continued to ask coordinators for improved communication and more information about their roles, but these cases were few in number.

Several new suggestions were worth noting. One principal suggested a newsletter for mentors and beginning teachers; another suggested that a "web-site with information on classroom management, discipline, and instruction for new teachers would be a good starting point". Still another principal wondered if recently retired teachers could be used as mentors. Furthermore, "Experienced mentors are hard to find and this could help both the BT and the relatively inexperienced mentors." This seemed to infer that it was difficult to recruit mentors. However, when asked to rate the level of difficulty they experienced, 43% of the principals indicated it was easy and 25% said it was very easy; only 2.4% suggested recruiting was difficult and 1.2% thought it was very difficult.

It was very evident from their surveys that principals were generally very appreciative of the BTIP. The strongest evidence of this is the fact that 100 % of them recommended the continuation of the provincial induction program. Several were particularly complimentary of the contributions made by their district coordinators. One principal, who was obviously pleased with recent developments in his district, described his new feelings this way:

> A number of good things are taking place in our district these past few years - BTIP, BAIP, Multi-disciplinary Teams, to mention a few. The first-year teacher in my school who participated in the program is a quality teacher with a very bright future in the classroom. This program afforded her the opportunity to actively learn from a seasoned veteran who is certainly an expert in her field. Education has lagged behind the real works for years in this respect. Successful businesses became successful by investing in their most valuable resource - people. Mentoring just makes sense, particularly in a high pressure profession.
>
> - District 8 Principal

A principal in District 13, wrote, "This program is undoubtedly one of the most valuable and creative we have seen for the training and welfare of new teachers. Keep up the good work!" A colleague added, "I think this is an excellent program and should be continued at all costs." An administrator in District 2 reinforced this sentiment, "I know that this is a valuable program for beginning teachers. So much info that we take for granted is actually pertinent and valuable to BT's. This is a great program to keep." Although a few principals had suggestions for further improvements, clearly they support the BTIP as it is presently constituted and want it to continue.

District Coordinators' Perspectives

The perspective of the district coordinators is not as easy to identify as it used to be. Most years it has been possible to identify twelve district coordinators -- one per district. This

year, one person acted as coordinator for both School Districts 6 and 8 -- two districts under the same superintendent. Two supervisors shared the position in School District 12. In District 10, when the coordinator left his supervisory position in mid-year to take a principalship, he was not replaced. This year, although we will speak of eleven coordinators, that figure represents the number of questionnaires returned as well as the number of administrative units responsible for the BTIP .

Overall, the district coordinators have a lot of experienced with the BTIP. Only one person was a first-year appointment, quite a change from1998 when there were six new faces. Five have been BTIP coordinators for four years, while three were returning for a fifth year. All but one of the eleven felt that they were the logical choice for the appointment.

The coordinators were asked if they felt they had received adequate support from the Department of Education, the NB Teachers' Association, their district office, and the school principals in their own district. Table 9 records their answers to this question.

Table 9

District coordinators perceptions of support from different BTIP stakeholders

	Levels of Perceived Support		
	Adequate	Inadequate	Not Applicable
Stakeholders			
Dept of Education	10	1	
NBTA	8	3	
District offices	10		1
School principals	10	1	

Only one coordinator indicated that support from the Department of Education was inadequate. This was a negative change from 1999 when everyone felt this stakeholder's support was adequate. Three coordinators described support from the New Brunswick Teachers' Federation as inadequate. This also was a weaker response than the previous year when one coordinator said it was inadequate and two felt it was marginal. This year, one of the three clearly identified reduced funding as the reason for taking this position. As indicated at the beginning of this report, the total contribution by the NBTA has not changed, but as the number of participants increases, the allocation per partnership decreases in proportion.

Perceived support by district administrators and support staff remained the same while the number who perceived that principals' support was adequate, improved from eight to ten; one coordinator still felt there was room for improvement. This coordinator, who also felt there had been inadequate support from the Department and the NBTA, wrote, "In order to change the learning culture in the Province of New Brunswick we must focus much, much more attention on beginning teachers." Despite this apparent negativism, this person described his/her involvement

with the BTIP this year as a very positive experience. The perceptions of this coordinator seemed somewhat out of step with those of his peers whose position would likely be closer to the position expressed in the following quotation:

> The teachers and administrators all believe that the program helps beginning teachers. They also realize the limits everyone has, and, with the resources available, this is the best we can do.

With respect to stakeholder's support, the largest number of comments referred to support of the Program by principals. One said, "Principals are becoming more familiar with the program and selecting mentors more readily." Another commented, "Principals are too busy to take an active role in the program." Still another wrote, "Up to this point, not much has been required of the principal. Their level of involvement should increase (e.g. signing off on the BTIP action plan)."

It seems that district coordinators walk a fine line between ignoring some principals and overloading others. While there still seems to be a desire by some principals for more information and opportunities for involvement, others, like the one referred to in the following quotation, are happy to be left in the dark:

> For the most part, people are supportive. One principal asked that I not include him in my communications with pairs [because he] felt it was unnecessary to be kept informed.
>
> - District Coordinator

Problems Encountered. The coordinators were rather terse in their identification of specific problems. The first-year coordinator wrote the longest response to an invitation to identify problems they encountered:

> This was my first year as coordinator. Managing the budget was time consuming. Time is at a premium and I did not have enough time to interact with pairs throughout the year as much as I would have liked. I would like to have done more work with the mentors.

Whereas funding and budgets used to be a common complaint from coordinators, no one else mentioned it, except to comment that it was difficult "getting [participants] to spend allocated funds". Lack of time to observe teachers in the classroom was also mentioned by two of the veteran coordinators. A third found it difficult to find time to visit the rural areas in her district, yet it was necessary because there were not enough supply teachers to free everyone to attend meetings at a central location. The District 10 coordinator had a similar problem on a larger scale, because he "had to do everything in triplicate (i.e. Grand Manan, Eastern [District] 10, Western [District] 10)". The District 14 coordinator also indicated that obtaining supply teachers created problems whenever group meetings were called. He mentioned that finding appropriate matches between mentors and beginning teachers was also difficult. Another coordinator noted a problem with lack of participation by some pairs for district-level events.

Positive Features. When asked to describe the positive features of their involvement in the BTIP, the district coordinators had a number of worthwhile insights. The coordinator responsible for the Program in two districts wrote enthusiastically:

> This program allows me to see first-hand things that make my heart sing. That is what energizes me. I know that I make a difference to those teachers.
>
> - District 6 & 8 Coordinator

The District 16 coordinator commented that "the people in the program are, for the most part, so positive and upbeat. They were a pleasure to work with". Others valued "working with new, young teachers", the "enthusiasm from the BT's and their mentors" and "seeing the interaction between the pairs". Everyone seemed to feel satisfied by this aspect of their job because they were able "to serve as an instructional leader and to promote teacher growth".

Another feature of the BTIP which provides satisfaction to coordinators is seeing beginning teachers re-hired the following year. Retaining a high percentage of new teachers in the system is, of course, a goal of any induction program. Although the survey was conducted in May, coordinators estimated that close to 97% of the beginning teachers would be re-hired. This is an indication of how dramatically the job outlook for teachers in New Brunswick has improved in the last two years. It will also provide some comfort to those new teachers who in previous surveys complained of the stress associated with lay-offs after temporary contracts and the uncertainty of a continuing position.

As in previous years, every BTIP district coordinator strongly recommended the continuation of the Program.

Conclusions

Despite continuing growth in the number of participants, overall, the BTIP appears alive and well at age five. This years' participants gave the Program the highest level of endorsement ever received. A number of the problem areas which had been identified in earlier reports, have been successfully addressed. Specifically, I am referring to inconsistent training of mentors at the district level, unclear Program expectations, and difficulties accessing NBTA funds. The mentor training and the orientation of beginning teachers have become reasonably well standardized in every district; quality sessions are being delivered in a timely fashion; initiatives in a few districts now provide beginning teachers with summer workshops so that they will receive support prior to the start of the school year. Furthermore, the data seem to indicate that district coordinators have improved communication with school principals concerning BTIP activities, although it is important that district coordinators sustain this initiative and share success stories. It appears that limited progress has also been achieved in addressing the unique needs of specialist and itinerant teachers, although it is clear this problem will need continuing efforts and creative solutions.

Although the paperwork associated with funding access appears to have been streamlined, I have an additional concern that, because the NBTA contribution is a fixed amount, the total amount of funding which is available to pairs of teacher will continue to be eroded every

time the total number of participants increases. Asking for a larger grant from the NBTA may be unrealistic and inappropriate. However, it is in the interests of the Steering Committee to review projected demographics for future induction programs with respect to participant numbers and anticipated funding in order to determine their impact on the Program. Basically, the Committee needs to determine the minimum amount of funding necessary to keep this Program viable and whether current levels of financial support are adequate for projected numbers of participants.

Activities which support mentors and beginning teachers at both the district and school level continue to be well-organized, comprehensive, and valued by all participants. The level of participation in lower-risk professional activities has remained stable and is at an acceptable level. However, the participation rates for more demanding activities such as observing colleagues teach, being observed by one's mentor, and discussing observations, declined this year, yet remain comparable to earlier years' data. Is this a cause for concern or is the Steering Committee setting unreasonable standards? It might be useful to hold a forum to discuss these questions and to share stories which illustrate attempted innovations in this important aspect of professional development. Those teachers who participate in more demanding professional activities are enthusiastic about the benefits; significant numbers of beginning teachers annually ask for more opportunities to share teaching insights based on real-time observations. To what extent should this agenda be promoted, given the time, expertise, and funding currently available to the BTIP?

This year the number of beginning teachers who had previous permanent contracts was approximately 24%, while the number of newly graduated teachers fell below 50% for the first time. While it is clear that the BTIP has been beneficial to most teachers with previous experience who have qualified for the Program, the BTIP is designed for new teachers and teachers with very limited teaching experience. Others are more likely to modify the expected activities or, in extreme cases, to be dysfunctional or non-participants. To insure the continuing integrity of the Program and to make the best use of limited resources, the Steering Committee may wish to re-visit the criteria for a 'beginning teacher'. While it is true that everyone goes back to zero when a paradigm shifts, it is also true that the learning curve is much shorter for a teacher with previous full-time experience in a classroom. I suggest that someone who has previously taught for two years on a full-time contract, even in another jurisdiction, should not qualify for this program. Although these teachers still need support in their new environment, this can generally be provided through informal mentoring or short-term buddy arrangements which can be set up by the principal.

It is clear that the success of the BTIP depends on the goodwill and cooperation of many individuals within the educational community. However, within this community, district coordinators play a key role. The fragility of this link was reinforced this year by the re-assignment of the District 10 coordinator during the school year. In many districts, one individual acts as the BTIP coordinator, yet is responsible for many other portfolios within the district. We cannot assume that one person will always be there to do the job of coordinator or that one person can handle it effectively. I am impressed by the model which has been used in District 12 for the past two years, in which several supervisors share the responsibilities of the

BTIP. The collaborative and contingency benefits of this model are obvious and worthy of consideration in other districts. Sharing and/or rotating the role, in effect, prepares others to take over a coordinator's position when retirements, illness, or re-assignments create gaps in leadership. The BTIP is too valuable to risk pinning its success on the health and expertise of only one individual in each district.

This fifth annual report of the Beginning Teacher Induction Program in New Brunswick concludes that this program continues to make a significant contribution toward building a strong foundation for teaching in this province. This is not, however, a time to relax on past accomplishments or to assume that the Program will continue to be successful without the continued effort and skill of the Steering Committee and the financial support of the Department of Education and the New Brunswick Teachers' Association. Instead we need to remain committed to the vision which is the basis of teacher induction by doing all that we can to enable experienced teachers to reflect on their practice and to share their knowledge with new colleagues in a collaborative setting.

Recommendations

1. The overall integrity and value of the BTIP remain very high. This program should continue using current guidelines and features which have proven to be successful.

2. District coordinators should continue in their efforts to inform principals about the goals of the BTIP and to clearly communicate ways in which they may either contribute or participate.

3. The chairperson of the Steering Committee should encourage school directors or superintendents to consider the option of appointing more than one person to share the position of district coordinator. This shares the significant workload associated with this position and provides a back-up in case of illness or appointment to another position.

4. Inter-district cooperation appears to be beneficial in the cases where it has been attempted. Other districts with logical connections are encouraged to explore this option.

5. As the number of participants continue to increase, the fixed NBTA grant structure causes reduced allocations to pairs of teachers. In order to seek ways to stabilize the annual allocation of funds and to facilitate planning for partners and organizers, the Steering Committee should review the demographics of projected induction programs and determine the implications of current funding levels on Program integrity.

6. District coordinators need to either provide training for mentors who encounter dysfunctional partners or make them aware that guidance will be provided if and when it is needed.

7. It appears that some progress has been made in training specialist and/or itinerant mentors how to adapt to the unique demands of their assignment. However, district coordinators need to continue this initiative and to share new insights with colleagues.

8. It is essential that as the expertise of the current district coordinators grows, ways and means to share this information, especially when a new coordinator is appointed, should be assured by the Steering Committee.

9. The initiative by several districts to offer summer workshops for beginning teachers or newly-appointed mentors addresses a long-standing complaint of BTIP participants that support should be provided before school begins. District coordinators who are unable to organize such activities, should encourage their beginning teachers or mentors to attend those offered in other districts.

10. With increasing numbers of beginning teachers and mentors participating in the BTIP, re-consideration should be given to excluding teachers who have taught for more than two years in a continuing contract, even if it was with another district or school unit outside the province.

11. The Steering Committee is encouraged to hold a forum to review the current rates of participation by mentors and beginning teachers in the higher-risk activities listed in Table 5, with a view to determining whether or not the BTIP expectations are reasonable.

12. The Steering Committee should make it clear to BTIP organizers and/or school administrators that asking one teacher to accept responsibility for mentoring more than one beginning teacher is not acceptable.

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